

# Study on the Spiritual Pension of the Rural Elderly

Yin Hanhan<sup>1</sup>, \*Zhang Wenjing<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Political Science and Law, University of Jinan, Jinan, Shandong, China

<sup>2</sup> Research Office, Women's Development Research Center of Shandong Province, Jinan, Shandong, China

\* Corresponding author. Email: 3048788585@qq.com

## ABSTRACT

At present, the material needs of the elderly have been gradually met, but the demand for spiritual care lacks sufficient attention. Under the background of aging population, the pension problem is increasingly serious. Therefore, it is great significance for the development of China to improve the pension situation of rural elderly people. The paper focuses on the group of rural elderly, studies the spiritual pension of rural elderly through case interviews. It is found that because of elderly's own problems, the weakening of the family spiritual pension and the insufficient role of the government, leading to the problem of spiritual pension is serious. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the economic income of rural residents, strengthen the spiritual self-support ability of the elderly and promote the government to play the main role effectively.

**Keywords:** rural elderly; spiritual pension; population aging

## 1. INTRODUCTION

At present, the speed of population aging is increasing. According to the prediction of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, it is estimated that the population over 60 years old in China will exceed 483 million in 2050, while the population over 80 years old will rise to 108 million. With the increasing aging population, the development of pension policy and pension industry are concerned. The new rural cooperative medical care, new rural insurance and minimum living security system gradually improved and various national preferential agricultural policies are gradually implemented, so that the material life of the rural elderly is basically guaranteed, but the spiritual pension demand problem is increasingly prominent.

There is no clear definition of the concept of spiritual pension in the academic circle. Some scholars point out that spiritual pension includes the spiritual services of respect, communication and communication obtained by the elderly from the family, community and society. On the other hand, it includes the spiritual demands of the elderly themselves for spiritual pleasure, social participation and self-realization.<sup>[1]</sup> On this basis, the concept is supplemented: pension service providers provide clients with a pension service model to meet their spiritual needs through institutionalized and non-institutionalized services. Service providers include

families, governments, social organizations, enterprises, etc.<sup>[2]</sup> Therefore, the paper defines "spiritual pension" as a service mode that provides spiritual support and services for the elderly and promotes the elderly to achieve their own spiritual satisfaction.

The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China stated clearly: "We should actively respond to the aging population, build a policy system and social environment for the aged, filial piety and respect for the aged, promote the combination of medical care and pension, accelerate the development of the cause and industry of aging." It fully confirms the determination and deployment of the national government to let the rural elderly enjoy a happy life. It is inevitable to realize the material pension and spiritual pension. Paying attention to the spiritual needs of the rural elderly is beneficial to realize the value goal of social fairness and justice. This paper attempts to summarize the current situation of rural elderly spiritual pension, analyze the existing problems, explore the causes of spiritual pension problems, and give corresponding suggestions.

## **2. THE CURRENT PROBLEMS OF MENTAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ELDERLY IN RURAL AREAS**

### ***2.1. The spiritual needs of the elderly have not been met***

Interviews found that the spiritual health of the elderly in the village was generally poor.

First, there are not too many leisure activities. It can't meet their own spiritual needs well. Second, the outbreak of family conflicts and lack of accompanying makes the elderly feel lonely, anxious and useless. With the growth of age, the physical health and social function of the elderly gradually decline, many rural elderlies have a sense of useless, with a negative attitude to life. In addition, they will curb their spiritual needs. For example, some old people think that have high demands on children and do not want to add trouble to them, silently bear the heart of emptiness and anxiety. It can be seen that the mental health of the elderly in the village is not optimistic, and the mental pension needs are not satisfied, and the mental pension consciousness has not been awakened.

### ***2.2. Insufficient family mental support for the aged***

The village pension model is relatively fixed, there are three sources: land, retirement wages and state subsidies, children. However, the majority of old people do not have pension insurance, so they mainly rely on children 's care. The study found that families did not fully play their spiritual pension function. For reasons of going out to work or becoming a family, their children do not live at home, which reduces the number of visits to their parents and verbal conversations to their parents, so that the elderly get insufficient emotional care in the family and even some elderly need to share some of the economic pressure of their children or grandchildren.

### ***2.3. Incomplete community Spiritual care services***

Mental care facilities and related services in the village are vacant. On the one hand, the village lacks facilities such as libraries, activity rooms and psychological consultation rooms. On the other hand, the service for the elderly is mainly reflected in the subsistence allowances, dispute settlement, sick visit, which can't effectively meet the spiritual needs of the elderly. To some extent, the village pays more attention to the material needs of the elderly, but has insufficient understanding of their spiritual needs.

From the above situation, it is not difficult to find that the mental endowment in this village has been completely

or partially ignored, so it is necessary to explore the causes of the mental endowment problems of the elderly in rural areas and explore the feasible path to improve their mental endowment quality.

## **3. ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES OF THE SPIRITUAL PENSION PROBLEMS OF THE RURAL ELDERLY**

### ***3.1. Insufficient self-spiritual pension ability of the elderly***

Self-spiritual pension refers to the elderly themselves by virtue of subjective enterprising attitude towards life, through positive and beneficial activities, to achieve spiritual pleasure, satisfaction and development.<sup>[3]</sup> The economic foundation is too weak to care about their spiritual life. Material condition is the foundation of mental endowment, according to the survey, most of the elderly in the village rely on farming to maintain a livelihood, without too much savings. The old people in the countryside are very thrifty and spend the money on their children's marriage, house purchase and grandchildren's education and upbringing. In order to reduce the burden on children, they have great economic pressure and have no energy to consider their own enjoyment and relaxation.

The elderly is heavily dependent on their children and have a single spiritual sustenance. Under the influence of traditional ideas, the spiritual life of the elderly is around their children and grandchildren. Due to the low educational level of the rural elderly, they rarely understand things outside of daily life through the Internet and books and are unwilling to take the initiative to learn new skills. In many cases, they regard their children as the only spiritual support. However, this demand for children' s companionship and attention are usually ignored by children for various reasons. When suffering from serious diseases or difficulties in life, they have to bear it by themselves. It is easy to feel lonely and depressed.

### ***3.2. Weakening of family spiritual support function***

The first change is family structure. A large number of rural labor force flowed out of the countryside, resulting in the phenomenon of rural hollow, empty nest of the elderly, empty-nest family has become the main family pattern in rural areas. Family pension is the most basic way of rural pension. Most empty-nesters yearn for their children and do not want to go to a nursing home, but contrary to such hopes, the double pressures of economy and employment have left the young with little energy to take care of the spiritual needs of the old. Besides, the focus of the family shifted from the old to the children. After the universal two-child policy, some

elderly people become the free nannies. The phenomenon of paying more attention to the young than the old is more prominent, ignoring old people's spiritual world.

Secondly, the filial piety culture consciousness of respecting and loving the old is gradually fading. The elderly is gradually marginalized in the family. Even, the old man because of the lack of labor capacity, in pension issues, children buck each other. Therefore, it is very important to reshape filial piety and cultivate the correct moral concept of rural young people.

### **3.3. Insufficient performance of government functions**

On the one hand, the equipment of spiritual pension service is imperfect. Most senior citizens are dissatisfied with the infrastructure in their communities. Spiritual pension services tend to be formalized. Psychological counseling room for the elderly has become a decoration. On the other hand, the lack of professional service personnel. By visiting the nursing home, we found that the service staff is 50 years old women in the village. Their work is mainly cleaning, taking care of the elderly, washing and cooking, and other basic life services. There is no professional service team and the process of providing services is very subjective. It can't meet the spiritual needs of the elderly.

The government lacks effective guidance for social organizations' establishment and operation.<sup>[4]</sup> At present, the rural community's mental endowment service organization, volunteer service organization is seriously insufficient. Activities for the elderly, song and dance groups, calligraphy associations and other interest groups exist in urban communities, but not in rural areas. Apart from the limited services provided by village committees to the elderly in accordance with local government regulations, there are no other non-governmental organizations involved. The government lacks reasonable guidance and supervision on the establishment and operation of these organizations, which increases the difficulty of the operation of mental elderly care services.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

"Spiritual pension" is the main carrier of carrying forward the traditional Chinese culture of respecting the elderly, but also a focus of the whole society. To promote the healthy development of rural mental endowment services, it needs the joint input of multiple subjects, such as family, government, community and society, and the elderly themselves should improve their spiritual self-maintenance ability, and jointly build a harmonious society with support, support and security for the elderly. Combined with the reality of rural areas in China, the following countermeasures and suggestions are put forward to solve the difficulties faced by rural spiritual pension: First, increase the economic income of rural

residents. Material security is a necessary condition for the realization of mental endowment. Therefore, it is necessary to increase policy preference for rural areas, adjust measures to local conditions, explore industrial development paths.<sup>[5]</sup> Second, strengthen the elderly spiritual self-support ability. The elderly needs to change their ideas, take the initiative to shift the focus of life, actively cultivate personal interests and hobbies, return to the crowd, in the communication with people to obtain social connections. Third, the government performs its duties and plays a major role. First of all, the government should further promote the importance of spiritual pension, supervise the propaganda and communication work of grassroots organizations and encourage social organizations to join the spiritual pension services, sharing the task of spiritual pension. Afterwards, schools should also cooperate with the government's propaganda work, strengthen the voluntary service activities of caring for the elderly, organize the young generation to learn the traditional virtues of the Chinese nation, learn to respect and care for the elderly, pay attention to the intergenerational transmission of filial piety culture, and promote the dissemination of respect culture in rural areas. The most important thing is that the government should establish a special support system to increase financial support for spiritual pension services in rural areas, improve rural infrastructure facilities and enrich the spiritual life of the elderly.<sup>[6]</sup> Then, we can introduce talents and provide them with professional training to establish a spiritual pension service team.

## **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

Yin Hanhan designed the study, performed the research, analyzed interview data. All authors wrote the paper.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

First of all, I am very grateful to my thesis advisor. In the next place, thanks for the cooperation of the villagers, I got a lot of interview materials, which laid the foundation for writing the paper. I think the paper is not the end of academic thinking.

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